

Promise? by JoMo3

Series: [Strange Conversations \[11\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-03-27

Updated: 2018-03-27

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:29:25

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,349

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

When something bad happens, Mike does his best to make El feel better.

Promise?

Author's Note:

This is a whopper of a story. I didn't mean for it to be this long, but here it is...

Just hold on a little longer, okay? He's gone. The bad man's gone. We'll be home soon and my mom... she'll get you your own bed. You can eat as many Eggos as you want. And... we can go to the snow ball...

Promise?

Promise.

It was a rainy Sunday night in Hawkins. Eleven and Mike were in his basement, finishing up some homework. Their friends had left before the storm began, leaving the two to put the finishing touches on their history project.

And now here it was, the completed project leaning against the downstairs banister, and Mike and Eleven on the couch, killing time until El had to leave and Mike had to go to sleep. Usually, Eleven would bike home, but Hopper had called the Wheelers when the storm began, and asked Karen to keep El at the house until he arrived to get her. It was now 10:30.

Eleven, her head resting on Mike's shoulder, let out a soft yawn. "Hopper should be here by now," she said, quietly.

"You trying to leave me?" Mike asked, jokingly.

She nuzzled her head into his neck and let out a sigh. " No . But I'm...tired."

"He's probably filling out paperwork or something, and lost track of time," Mike offered.

"Maybe..."

Eventually, Mrs. Wheeler came downstairs and told Mike that he had

to sleep, whether Hopper was there or not. She offered to fix up the couch for Eleven, and Mike even suggested El take his bed and he'd take the couch. But in the end, El chose to sleep in her fort. After making sure that she had enough pillows and blankets, Mike went up to his room to prepare himself for bed.

Something woke him hours later. Glancing at his bedside clock, he saw that it was only a little bit later than when he had gone upstairs; it was 12:32.

Fully opening his eyes, he slowly sat up to figure out what had woken him. He didn't hear the rain anymore, so it wasn't the storm. That's when he noticed the swirling blue and red lights lighting up his ceiling, coming from the window.

Getting out of bed, he looked outside and let out a gasp. There were two police cars out front, lights blinking. And, in the quiet, he could hear voices coming from downstairs.

What's going on ? he thought to himself. Even if Hopper *were* late, he wouldn't have come with another police car.

Opening his door, he slowly walked to the top of the stairs and looked down. The light was on by the front door, and he could hear his mom and dad talking quietly to somebody.

"....some punk..."

"We're doing everything we can to find him...."

"...keep her for a little bit..."

Mike went downstairs, slowly, and saw his parents talking softly to officers Powell and Callahan. The adults turned towards him as he reached the bottom step.

"Mom?" Mike asked, scanning the adults' faces. His mother's eyes were damp with tears.

She looked at his father, then back at Mike. "Chief Hopper's been

shot, Mike,” she told him. Mike’s eyes got big, but she continued, “He’s going to be okay, but Eleven’s going to stay with us for a little bit.”

“Where...where is she? Have you told her?” Mike began, backing up towards the stairs.

“She’s right over there,” his father said, pointing towards the family’s living room.

Walking cautiously, Mike walked into the living room. Eleven sat in a chair, legs drawn up to her chest, chin resting on her knees.

“El?” he asked, as behind him the adults went back to their conversation.

Eleven didn’t respond; it was as if she were in a trance.

“El?” Mike repeated, putting his hand gently on her shoulder. Snapping out of it, she blinked and turned to him.

“Mike?”

“How...I mean...are you alright?”

She looked up at him, and it was then that he noticed that her eyes were wet with tears.

“I’m sorry, El,” Mike said, hugging her. She hugged him back, gripping him tightly. After a moment they unwrapped themselves. “He’s going to be okay, though,” Mike offered.

Eleven nodded, wiping at her eyes. The two sat quietly, hands holding as Mike ran a finger over her knuckles in an attempt to make her feel better.

Officers Powell and Callahan eventually left, and Mrs. Wheeler made some hot chocolate in an attempt to soothe El’s nerves, though that did very little. She had just finished her cup, Mike sitting next to her at the kitchen table, when she uttered her second words since she’d woken up.

"I want to see him," Eleven said.

"Oh, honey," Mrs. Wheeler said, taking El's cup for her, "Powell and Callahan said not to go yet. They're still helping him, the doctors. We can go in the morning, okay?"

"*Now*," Eleven said stubbornly.

Mrs. Wheeler looked to Mike for help.

Taking her hand, Mike said, "El, it's okay. He's going to be alright, and we'll see him in the morning, okay?"

She pulled her hand from his, and stood up. Fuming, she went down to the basement, throwing the door closed with her mind.

Mike looked at his mom. They exchanged worried glances.

"Is she going to sneak out?" his mom asked.

Mike shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe."

They both knocked at the door, and attempted to open it, but Eleven's mind was keeping it shut.

"Go up to bed, Michael," his mother finally said. "I'll stay."

Reluctantly, Mike went up.

After about fifteen minutes, the basement door opened and Eleven came out, cheeks wet and dried blood under her left nostril.

"I'm sorry," she told Mrs. Wheeler, head bowed.

Mrs. Wheeler nodded her head, and got up and hugged the young girl. "I know, honey. I know. I know you want to see him, but there's not anything we can do right now. I promise, as soon as the sun comes up, we'll go down there. Why don't you go get some sleep in the meantime, okay?"

Eleven nodded, and wiped at the spot of blood under her nose.

A little later, Mike felt himself being shaken out of his sleep. His eyes slowly adjusting, he saw that it was still dark out; and the girl who had shaken him awake was kneeling next to his bed, her brown eyes looking into his as she slowly said his name.

“El?” he asked, rubbing at his eyes.

“Sorry,” she said to him.

“No, it’s okay. Are you...”

“Sorry for...before,” she added, taking his hand into hers.

Mike nodded, understanding what she meant. “It’s alright. I know you were mad.”

She leaned closer, kissing him, then pulled apart and climbed into his bed, surprising him.

“Um, El,” he began.

“I know,” she said. “Not...appropriate. But just a little bit.”

They lay there for a few minutes, Mike’s arms around her as she lay her head on his chest. A couple of moments later she abruptly sat up, eyes locked on Mike’s. “I want to see Hopper,” she muttered.

“I know, El, but...”

“TV,” she said. “I can...see him with the TV.”

Mike raised an eyebrow. “What?”

She explained how, using the TV, she could use her abilities to see how Hopper was doing. Mike had a lot of questions about *that* ability, but felt it wasn’t the right time to bombard her with questions about this new power. Instead, the two snuck back down to the family room and, making sure the volume was low enough that his parents wouldn’t hear, but loud enough that El would be able to interact with the static, Mike took a seat on the couch. He watched as El wrapped

a rag around her eyes, tying it behind her head.

“Am I okay to be here?” he asked. “Do you want me to leave?”

“No,” Eleven answered, “Just...quiet.”

Mike nodded, nervously wringing his hands.

Her eyes closed behind the towel, Eleven concentrated and thought of Hopper as she listened to the static in the television set. Soon, she was standing in the Void.

She heard a *beep...beep...beep...* and spun around, looking for it's source. She saw someone, not too far away in the blackness, laying in a bed. She cautiously walked towards it as the *beeping* got louder. When she reached the bed, she was happy to see it was, indeed, Hopper. He lay on his back under covers, his eyes closed. There were tubes connected to him.

“Hopper?” she weakly called. “Dad?”

In the Void, Hopper's eyes fluttered, but stayed closed. Hoarsely, he said, “El?”

She smiled, walking closer. “I'm right here. Are you okay?”

He groaned, but didn't answer.

“Hop?” she called, but he evaporated in front of her. “Hopper?” she called again, a little louder.

A moment later, she whipped the blindfold off her eyes, heart pounding as she looked around the room. Mike was kneeling next to her, hand on her back.

“Are you alright?” he asked.

She nodded, trying to catch her breath.

“Hopper, is he...is he okay?”

Her breathing under control, she softly responded, “Yes.”

Mike nodded, scooting back against the couch. El scooped back as well, settling next to him.

“How’d he look?” Mike asked.

“Tired. Hurt,” she said, wiping at her nose. Letting out a sigh, she lay her head on the cushion behind her.

“He’s going to be okay,” Mike said, taking her hand in his.

“Promise?” she asked, glancing at him.

Nodding, Mike answered, “Promise.”

*

*

The next morning, the two kids piled into the Wheelers’ station wagon as Mrs. Wheeler drove them to the hospital. Mike had called his friends on the walkie earlier, alerting them to he and El’s absence at school.

Eleven was nervous walking into the hospital, having never been in one before. Gripping Mike’s hand, she followed his mom as they navigated their way through the building. They eventually arrived on the right floor, where Mrs. Wheeler talked with the nurse outside of Hopper’s room. Once the nurse turned away, she looked over her shoulder at El. “Are you ready?”

Mike squeezed her hand. Eleven nodded.

They entered the room, and El was reminded of the *beep...beep...beep* she’d heard last night in the Void. Hopper was sitting up in the bed, a

grin on his face as he scooped out the remainder of the Jell-O he had left in his cup.

“Hey, there she is,” he said, smiling, when he saw Eleven.

Feeling tears coming, she rushed over to where he was, grabbing him in a hug.

Chuckling, Hopper hugged her back, saying “Easy, easy, kid. Everything’s okay.”

“I was scared,” she said into his shoulder.

Hopper rubbed her back as she pulled away. “Sorry for giving you a scare.” Looking up at Karen, he thanked her for watching El. He gave a nod to Mike.

“How long will you be here?” Karen asked.

“Doctor said probably till Thursday,” Hopper said. “But I don’t think it’ll take that long.”

“Are you hurt?” Eleven asked.

“You kidding? It’s gonna take a lot more than some dumbass with a pistol to hurt me,” he answered.

Eleven didn’t seem fazed, responding with “Friends don’t lie.”

“It hurts *some*,” he answered, honestly. “They got me right through my side,” Hopper explained, indicating his left side, “But I’ll be alright.”

“Promise?” Eleven asked.

“Promise.”

The three visitors hung out with Hopper for a little until Karen had to go and run some errands; she left the kids with Hopper.

The trio of Mike, Eleven, and Hopper spent time watching television,

Mike on the bedside chair while Eleven tried to share the bed with Hopper, still worried about him. When Karen returned, all three of them were napping.

After waking them, she had a hard time convincing Eleven they had to leave.

Shaking her head, El said, “He needs me.”

“Kid, I’ll be fine,” Hopper said.

“Yeah, El, we’ll come and see him tomorrow,” Mike said.

Eleven huffed, upset with not getting her way. Begrudgingly, she nodded her head.

She gave Hopper one more hug, then left with the Wheelers.

*

*

Mike thought having his girlfriend stay with him would be the coolest thing ever. And although it was fun, he didn’t enjoy it as much as he thought he would.

She ended up staying with them for two more nights, Tuesday and Wednesday. Tuesday she stayed home with Karen, while Mike went back to school, getting he and El’s assignments from Monday. Eleven, meanwhile, spent another day at the hospital, doting on her adoptive father as best she could. Karen dropped her off just before lunch, and picked her up when Mike got out of school.

Tuesday evening the two worked on their missed work in the basement while they alternated topics of discussion. Mike told her about what she’d missed at school, while she talked about her day at the hospital.

From time to time Mike would look over at her, during the quiet moments, and would see her mind far away, no doubt thinking about Chief Hopper.

Mike didn't *want* to, but he couldn't help but feel a little...jealous. Jealous because of the way all of her attention was on Hopper. And he *hated* feeling like that. Because he knew that if it'd been *his* dad that'd been shot, his mind would always be on him, too.

But when they had seen that Hopper was going to be alright, Mike had been hoping they would be able to ease back into the swing of things: holding hands in the basement, or snuggling on the couch and watching TV together. Perhaps sneaking downstairs at night to see her and lay with her in the fort as they talked themselves to sleep.

But even after assurances from both Mike, his mom, and Hopper himself, El still seemed so worried. And the fact that Mike felt jealous that her thoughts weren't on *him* made him feel absolutely terrible.

"Mike?" Eleven asked, snapping him out of his daydream.

"Yeah, El?"

"What'd you get for number four?"

"Number...oh. Um, I didn't get to that one yet."

With Hopper's insistence, El went to school on Wednesday. She was, understandably, quieter than usual. When it was lunchtime, the rest of their friends peppered her with questions:

"Is Hopper okay?"

"When does he go home?"

"Are you and Mike just making out the whole time?"

"Are *you* okay?"

"Guys," Mike said, putting up a hand for them to stop. "Just let her

eat, okay? She'll talk about it when she wants to."

"Thanks, Mike," she whispered, clutching his hand under the table.

The rest of the day was the same; the group asking questions and Mike telling them to leave El alone. El could also feel the eyes of students in the hallway on her as she walked down the halls. When the final bell rang, she was more than happy to go home.

She rode her bike home with the boys, and was surprised when she arrived at the Wheeler's home and saw Hopper's jeep parked outside.

Mike watched as El jumped off her bike and sprinted into the house as soon as they rode up. He parked his own bike in the garage, then quickly went and got her bike as well, putting it away with his. When he got inside, he found his mom, Hopper, and Eleven sitting at the kitchen table; the adults drinking coffee while El watched her adoptive father with a look of both concern and relief.

"Hi, chief," Mike said.

"Hey kid," Hopper nodded. "I was just telling your mom, thanks for taking care of El."

Mike shrugged. "Anytime. How're you feeling?"

"Still sore," Hopper answered, rubbing his side. "But I'm getting there."

"Mike, why don't you and El go get her things. She's going home tonight."

Mike nodded, and he and Eleven went down to the basement, her home for the past few days.

He gathered the couple of books she had in the fort, while she collected things from the bathroom.

"I bet it's going to feel good, sleeping in your own bed again," he commented, searching for her backpack.

“What?” she called from the bathroom.

He repeated what he’d said, and she nodded, coming out of the bathroom. “Yes.”

Mike handed her her backpack, and looked around the room. “I’m really glad he’s okay, El.”

She smiled. “Me too.” Strapping on her backpack, she hugged him, nuzzling her head into the crook of his neck. “Thank you.”

“For what?” he asked, confused.

“For taking care of me.”

Rubbing her back, he said, “I’ll always take care of you, El. I love you.”

She smiled. “Love you too.”

The two went upstairs, where Hopper and Karen had just finished their conversation.

“Ready, kid?” Hopper asked, standing up.

El nodded, and gave Mike a kiss on his cheek. “Bye,” she whispered.

“Bye, El,” he said back.

After giving Mrs. Wheeler a hug, El followed her father out to the truck.

Over the next couple of days, Mike only saw Eleven a handful of times; and most of that was at school. He’d invite her over to the basement to hang out with their group of friends, or to do something with just him, but she would always decline. And Mike once again felt that bad jealous feeling all over again. Hopper was fine now, shouldn’t things get back to normal? Was he being too clingy?

After three days with school being the only form of communication

between he and El, Mike needed somebody to talk to. So he went to who he usually went to when he needed relationship advice: Nancy.

She was on the phone when he went to her room, twirling the cord around her finger as she laughed into the receiver. Seeing her brother standing awkwardly in her doorway, she rolled her eyes and said into the phone, “Jonathan, I’ll talk to you later, okay? Bye.”

Hanging up, she sat up and looked at Mike. “What’s wrong this time?”

Mike shuffled into the room, and sat at the edge of the bed, rubbing the back of his neck nervously. “It’s about El.”

“Well, *duh* ,” Nancy said, adding another eyeroll for emphasis. “The only time you come to my room is to talk about your girlfriend.”

“Nevermind,” he said, beginning to stand.

“Mike, come on,” she said, getting serious. “I was kidding. What’s up?”

“It’s nothing. Just...she’s been spending all her time with Hopper, and it just...sucks.”

“Mike, he was *shot* ,” she said.

“I know! And I feel shitty about it, but I can’t help it. Does that make me a bad boyfriend?”

“Have you told her this?”

“No,” he said, shaking his head.

“Well, then, no. You can’t say that to her. You’ll look like an asshole. And a clingy one at that.”

“Then what do I do?”

“As hard as it sounds, you’re just going to have to grit your teeth and support her. Eventually, things will go back to the way they were. But come on, Mike. If this’d been Dad or Mom that’d been shot, you’d

probably be the same way.”

“I know, I know,” he said, putting his face in his hands.

Nancy sighed. “So what’re you going to do?”

Sitting up, Mike answered, “Just gonna have to grit my teeth, I guess.”

Of course, he didn’t grit his teeth for very long. Two days later he was finally able to get Eleven to come over to his house to work on homework with the rest of the party. The group spent an hour working on their science homework, and when it began to get dark out, everyone headed their separate ways. After seeing his friends off, Mike was surprised when he returned to the basement and saw El gathering her things.

“El? What’s wrong?” he asked.

“I have to go home,” she said, zipping up her backpack.

“Oh. I was kind of hoping you were going to stay for dinner. My mom’s making meatloaf.” He said this with a smile, as he knew this was Eleven’s favorite dish of his mother’s. Plus, that ever since he’d found out El was coming over he had begged his mom to make meatloaf.

Shaking her head, Eleven strapped on her backpack. “Hopper will be getting home soon. He needs me.”

“But I thought he was feeling better?” Mike asked, confused.

Eleven paused, then said, “Not yet. I need to be there for him.”

“It’s not like you’re there for *me* anymore,” he said under his breath.

“What?” she asked, looking up.

“Nothing,” he said, sighing and turning away. “Let’s go.”

“Mike,” she said, taking his hand. “What’s wrong?”

Letting out another sigh, he let it all out, saying, “You never want to do anything, El! I hardly ever see you. You’re always with Hopper, and when you’re here or at school, you’re thinking about him. He doesn’t need you anymore, he’s better!”

He felt his heart beating in his chest, as she glared at him. He mentally prepared himself for whatever happened next; if she were going to slap him, yell at him, or use her powers to send him flying across the room.

What he wasn’t expecting, though, was to see a tear run down her cheek, or for her face to fall.

“El,” he said, reaching for her, “I’m sorry. I just...”

But she just spun around, and stormed out of the house. Mike dropped his head, feeling like crap.

**

It took a few days, but Hopper finally felt he was getting back into the swing of things. His hip hurt like hell, but for the most part he was feeling better.

One reason was because of a certain telekinetic teen he’d adopted, who waited on him day and night. From the moment she awoke in the morning until she rested her head at night, the kid was always checking up on him. She’d wake before he did, making breakfast and preparing a new bandage for him to wear on his side for the day. Before she left for school she’d make sure he had everything he needed; whether he was going to work or not. She’d return from school, everyday, at around 3:45 and would immediately get a new bandage ready, prep dinner, and take care of anything else around the house.

The first couple of days it felt good, to be honest; he didn’t have to

lift a finger. But after almost a week it began to become a little too much. He'd stayed home from work his first two days out of the hospital, but now that he was back into his routine, having El there every time he turned around, her big eyes looking at him, checking to see if he was okay, it was getting...annoying. And her questions. Jesus Christ, all the time with the questions:

Are you okay? Do you promise?

Does it hurt?

Do you need a new pillow?

Is the bandage too tight? Too loose?

Want me to bring you a beer?

Do you want me to change the channel?

Plus, besides school, she hadn't really left the house since he'd gotten back. He was beginning to worry that *she* was worrying too much.

That's why he was a little relieved when he got home from work and found an empty house.

"El?" he called out. "You here?" After getting no response, he saw the note on the table. Picking it up, he scanned it, and was happy to read she was out with Wheeler. She deserved some time with her friends, and he could use some alone time. He grabbed a beer from the fridge, then gingerly sat on the couch. He had just turned on the television when he heard the front door unlock and open, then slam shut with a little too much force.

Ah, well. It was nice while it lasted.

"Hey, kid," he called. "You have fun?"

But when he turned to see her, she wore a scowl on her face, and she nearly threw her backpack into a chair at the table, nearly knocking it over.

"Uh-oh," Hopper said, sitting up as she walked over to him, pulling at

his uniform.

“Your bandage,” she said, tugging a little *too* hard. “Needs to be changed.”

“It’s fine,” he said, pushing her hands away. “What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing,” she said, sitting next to him on the couch, folding her arms.

“Yeah, right. What’s going on?”

She started to talk, then paused. Looking at him, she said, “You never told me.”

“What?”

“You never told me how it happened,” she said, pointing to his side.

Shaking his head, he said “You don’t need to know about that.”

“Friends don’t lie,” she reminded him, which made him roll his eyes.

Rubbing his face, Hopper said, “I was at the Mini-Mart. Getting a pack of smokes for the next day. This....punk comes in, doesn’t see me, and sticks up the guy at the register. I told him to freeze, he didn’t....and he shot me.”

Eleven’s face paled. “What happened to the punk?”

Hopper shook his head, a look of regret on his face. “He got away.”

“He’s still out there? The bad man?”

“Well, yeah. But Hawkins is a small town, we’ll find him.”

Eleven choked back a sob, and lay her head on Hopper’s shoulder, her arms wrapping around his middle.

“It’s okay, kid, really,” Hopper told her, rubbing her back.

“I don’t want you to get hurt,” she said.

“I know. And I’m sorry I let you down. Won’t happen again.”

When she was all cried out, she took a breath, and told him what Mike had said.

“What’d you do?” he asked when she finished.

“I left,” she said.

“Hm.”

“Hm?” she asked.

“Nothing. I’m just surprised you didn’t send the kid flying across the room or something.”

Shaking her head, she said, “I’m not going to hurt Mike.”

“Okay. But do you think he has a point?”

“A point?”

“I’m better, El,” he told her. “I mean, it still hurts, but I’m a lot better now. I love you and all, and you can still help out around here, but you’ve got to get back to your life, too.”

His words stuck with her when she went to bed that night. She had known for some time that Hopper was feeling better. So why wasn’t she going back to her own life? What was she afraid of?

The answer hit her right before she dozed off.

Before school the next day, Mike arrived with the party members-Lucas, Dustin, and Will-and they waited at the bike rack for Eleven and Max.

“Why so glum, chum?” Dustin asked.

“It’s nothing,” Mike said.

It’s *some* thing,” Will said. “You’ve been quiet since we met up.”

“El and I had kind of a fight,” Mike admitted.

“What’d you do now?” asked Lucas.

“I...” Mike stopped as he sat up, seeing El on her bike and Max on her skateboard, riding next to each other and coming this way.

“Hi, El,” Mike said, cheerfully, as the two girls arrived.

“Hi,” she said quietly, putting her bike away.

The group walked into school, Dustin and Will in a heated argument about which X-Men villain was the best, while Lucas and Max made small talk as they entered the building.

Dustin, Lucas, and Max’s lockers came up first, and the group began to disband. Will’s was a ways down the hall, as was Mike’s. El’s locker was farther down. Usually El would go with Mike to his, then they’d go together to hers. Today, however, she kept on walking. Mike quickly grabbed the things he needed from his locker, then swiftly made his way down to hers.

“I’m sorry,” he said when he got next to her. “El, please, I’m...”

“It’s okay,” she said, trading books between her backpack and her locker.

“Are you sure? Because you aren’t looking at me.”

Turning towards him, she said, “It’s okay. We’ll talk later.”

He nodded. “Okay.”

Still, she didn’t really talk to him throughout the day. They had three classes together, as well as lunch, and though she would acknowledge

him and talk to him *some* , Mike was fearful of the worst.

When school ended, the party rode home together. Instead of making a turn to go home, Mike was surprised when Eleven kept riding with he and Lucas towards their houses.

“You aren’t going home?” Mike asked.

“No,” she said, quietly.

He didn’t ask anything else as the trio headed down Maple Street. Lucas turned into his driveway, and El kept riding next to Mike. When they got to his house, they both got off their bikes.

“Do you, uh...want to come in?” he asked her.

Nodding, she followed him inside and the two went into the basement.

They sat in an uncomfortable silence for a few minutes until Mike, no longer able to take it, blurted out “I’m sorry I said what I said, El. It was so stupid and you spend all the time you need to with Hopper because he’s your dad and it was selfish and stupid and shitty of me to say what I said yesterday and I’ll never say anything like that again I promise because I love you and I want you to do whatever you want to do but just remember I’m here if you need me and I’ll never be stupid like that again. Well, *never* is kind of hard because even if I try I’m sure I’m going to do *some* thing stupid even though I don’t want to but please just let me try because...”

She hugged him, getting him to stop.

“Sorry,” he said as she pulled away.

“S’okay,” she said.

“No, El, it’s not. Your dad was shot. And if that’d been my dad, or my mom...” he shook his head, not wanting to think about it.

Eleven sighed. “I don’t like hopsitals.”

“You mean hospitals?”

Nodding, she continued. "When we saw Hop at the... hos pital, I didn't like seeing him like that. I thought that was why I've been...ignoring everything else. But then I thought about it last night."

"And?"

He saw tears building in her eyes as she continued. "I couldn't help him," she choked out.

"What do you mean?"

"If I had been there," she said, wiping at her eyes, "I could have stopped him. The bad man. But I wasn't there. It's all my fa.."

"El, it is *not* your fault," Mike said, wrapping his arms around her. "Don't even think that. You didn't know it was going to happen. Even Hopper didn't know. Sometimes things like this just happen, and there's nothing you can do about it."

She sniffled, then said, "I don't want to lose him."

"I know."

"I don't want to lose you, too," she added.

He chuckled. "I'm not going anywhere."

Sitting up, she said, "I'm sorry if I ignored you."

"Don't apologize. You were taking care of your dad. I was the one being a mouthbreather, El. Not you."

They sat quietly for a few minutes, the only sounds being Mrs. Wheeler walking around upstairs. Finally, Mike asked, "So how is Hopper doing, anyway?"

El smiled. "Good. Really good."

Mike smiled as well. "I'm glad to hear it."

Raising up, she placed a kiss on his cheek. "Love you."

“Love you too,” he said back.

Sighing, she asked, “Does your mom have any meatloaf left?”

Mike chuckled. “I think she might. If not, I’ll get her to make some.”

“Do you promise?” she asked jokingly, reluctantly letting go as he stood up.

“Promise,” he told her. “Be right back.”

Eleven watched him go up the stairs, a smile coming to her face as she did. Laying her head against the cushion behind her, she let out a sigh of contentment.

“El! There’s no more meatloaf,” Mike called down. “But there’s Eggo’s!”

Smiling even wider, she stood up. Eggo’s, Mike, and a healthy Hopper? What more could she ask for?

Author’s Note:

So, that’s it! This is the end of my Strange Conversations series. It was supposed to be a series of one-shots but turned into one, connected, story. In a month or so I’ll be doing a Strange Conversations 2.0, revolved around quotes from the second season (just gives me another reason to watch it again. For studying purposes, of course). Thank you so much for reading my stories, there’ll be more coming (hopefully) soon.

Thanks again for reading.